New Fiction

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basement kitchen of the Fifty-fourth street lodging house (fat Julia who was once the slim Giuletta of Rome), all unbelievable, but you believe in it only the more.

Something ought to be said of Mr. Marechal Wimple, otherwise "Weenie" Wimple, conductor of the children's page and fabricator of bedtime stories for the paper—a seventeen year slave to that juvenile fairyland—altogether lovable, altogether human in his whimsicality, his romance and his final heroism. In fact, if we must choose among these delectable folk, Wimple is the best done of the lot. It is a character study that suggests that if Mr. Gabriel chooses to follow that line he may be capable of writing a novel of first rate importance.

The slightly moralized conclusion of the fable is, perhaps, a little too obvious. Jiminy and her lover, of course, realize, after the sonnets have been found, and lost again, that they knew the message already:

> And had they really read them, these old celebrations of a love long dust, what should they have learned which was not now their secret? What was there written in the book of any man which they had not already known, already read, recited, to remember until life should end? Beyond life, too, perhaps. . . .

Yet the conclusion is not overstressed, and it was, perhaps, necessary to state it clearly. The book is one that beyond question marks the coming of a new American novelist who may go far, for it shows an unusual mastery of technic, of difficult construction, as well as the fineness of insight and the poetic gift, which Mr. Gabriel's earlier work has shown to a large and sympathetic audience.

GEORGE WOOD.

THE SIN OF MONSIEUR PETTIPON. By Richard Connell. George H. Doran Company.

MR. CONNELL is a happy *farceur*. Some of the dozen stories in this collection are very good, and the average is fair to middlin' of the standardized American magazine humorous short story. They vary considerably among themselves as to carefulness of finish and also as to felicity of plot. Some are just a bit overfamiliar, like the case of the man who attained an appearance of "culture" by memorizing the articles in the A volume of the encyclopædia, only to be eclipsed by his more ambitious rival who swallowed the "Bis to Cal" volume also. Some of the others we have also met before. But they are cleverly put together and there is genuine laughter in all. The title story, of the conscientious second class French ship's steward, has originality, and is the best of the lot. It is a pleasant volume to dip into for one or two stories at a time, but one should not try to swallow it at a gulp.

The ghost of O. Henry broods over it all, with a rather sardonic grin, though one can imagine his intelligent Shade a little annoyed, as well as amused, at the things he has done to the American short story. Porter at his infrequent best was an indisputable genius, and that is precisely why his best remains quite inimitable. But it is only too easy to learn the mechanics of his usual method and turn out acceptably readable near O. Henry magazine stories. The effect has been painfully deadening. It makes one hunger for the appearance of another Stockton or, even better, a new H. C. Bunner, who might inspire the selective editorial mind to finer ideals. Mr. Connell could do very much better work than this, one feels sure, if his paymasters would let him, for his insight and understanding of human beings are real and his humor is sound, but the method is shackling.

THE MOON OUT OF REACH. By Margaret Pedler. George H. Doran Company.

THE highly temperamental heroine, Nan, of this novel is in imminent danger of being married all through the book, and when she is not being dragged toward the altar she is being tempted to elope, without ceremony. Naturally it keeps her in a "state of mind," and one can't help being sorry for her, although, of course, you know she is going to bring down the particular moon she really wants safely enough in the end. First there was the fashionable artist, with whom Nan rather fancied she was in love. He loves her, but he loves his art and financial success more and deliberately jilts her to marry a horridly rich widow. Next comes Peter, the famous novelist, and here their love is the Real Thing (needing capital letters), but unfortunately Peter is already equipped with a wife, who is a "she-devil" and also out of the way in India, but none the less an obstacle, as Peter is very, very noble and honorable, and so is Nan.

So she gets herself engaged to the rugged Roger, a country squire with a fat bank account and "broad acres" and a liberal allowance of "virility." But Roger, alas, like the famous Matthew Wycombe Coo of the "Bab Ballads," is "a man of nearly forty-two," though he has no other resemblance to the gentle Coo, being, indeed, a very rough and stern and passionate gentleman. Peter and the artist, however, hang around, and there is also the youthful Sandy, for the necessary comic relief as an extra lover. Anybody can see that Nan is in for trouble, as she is in honor bound to Roger, is still somewhat fascinated by the artist and really loves Peter.

The gentlemen take turns in harassing her. There is a good deal of kissing. "She was powerless in the viselike grip of his arms, and the next moment he was kissing her eyes and mouth and pulsing throat, with terrible, burning kisses that seemed to sear their way through her whole body." That was Roger; but the others do pretty well, too. To get away from Roger she runs off with the artist, but is rescued from him by Peter and Sandy just in time, and eventually Peter's unnecessary wife is removed, Roger experiences a change of heart and lets her off, and all is well.

It is a highly sentimental affair; much like the stories, once very popular, by "The Duchess," but superior, in that this tale is written in very good English, and even has some glimmers of humor. Moreover, we are in really good society all the time; the ladies and gentlemen are naturally well mannered and wear their clothes and their ideas without affectation. Nan even has a useful uncle who is a lord and who is done very well indeed. Mrs. Pedler's narrative is smooth, her manner pleasant, and despite its complete conventionality the story has some real interest and its incidents are well put together.

THE CITY OF FIRE. By Grace Livingston Hill. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company.

MRS. HILL has a large audience who will find this novel in line with her previous offerings. It deals with the troubles of the beautiful daughter of a small town minister, and of a young man who gets into no end of difficulties, is kidnaped, falsely accused of crime, &c., all to the proper trying of their souls and the attainment of a well moralized conclusion. There is also an enterprising small boy, who has troubles of his own. The story has plenty of movement, and an abundance of incident. Its "lesson" is nowhere left uncertain.

"I gave up all right to that" (i. e., "salvation"), says the suffering youth, "when I gave up God on the mountain."

"But God did not give you up," said the minister. "Do you think a true father would cast out a child because it got angry and shook its fist in his face? You will find Him again when you search for Him with all your heart."

It is the modern equivalent of the old fashioned moral tale; much more smoothly done, and with greater versimilitude than its literary ancestors, but essentially the same thing.

HAPPY RASCALS. By F. Morton Howard. E. P. Dutton & Co.

IT is always a pleasure to welcome the advent of a new humorist. Mr. Howard should find no difficulty in reaching an American audience with an offering so attractive as the ten stories of this collection. The title is well chosen, although in most cases the rascals come out of their adventurous experiments somewhat the worse for wear. But they are an engaging crew of trouble makers, happy in their intentions and very efficient, though the actual results are not always those intended. They are sailors of the W. W. Jacobs breed, but there is nothing of the imitative or conventional about them. Each is a definite human being, old Samuel Clark, who claims the privilege due to his years of pushing the kidnaped temperance lecturer into the water, and his younger associates, not forgetting the lovelorn mate of the Jane Gladys and the Captain.

These worthies take turns, more or less, at holding the center of the stage in the series of comic exploits, which commence between the crew of the Jane Gladys and another vessel, and run a happy course, afloat and ashore, up to "The End of a Perfect Day," which included the impounding of a whole case of "Purple Seal" tobacco.

Mr. Howard's mariners, ancient and youthful, are less extravagantly pictured than those whom Mr. Jacobs had made famous and, to some extent, are therefore the more plausibly real. The comic situations are all good, sometimes with even a touch of novelty. None of them are at all impossible, though they are often boisterous. The book is farce comedy of a very good grade, skilful in construction and felicitous in its stage setting. There is enough connective tissue to make it possible to read the book as a continuous whole and enough variety in the incident to keep it from being cloying, even if taken down at a single sitting.

WHAT TIMMY DID. By Mrs. Belloc Lowndes. George H. Doran Company.

THE best element of this book is its agreeable portrayal of a worth-while English family, including several marriageable girls who, with more or less good grace, have accepted the financial stringency of the post-war period and are bravely doing the household drudgery which in more prosperous days was done by a host of servants. Its inherent weakness comes from an attempt to serve two masters—to appeal equally to admirers, let us say, of "Pride and Prejudice" and "The Mysteries of Udolpho." And the result is a tax upon the mental digestion.

The enjoyable part of the story is mild comedy, arising from the fact that John Tosswill and his wife Janet tried for once to be sensible and worldly-wise, and so broke off the engagement of their favorite daughter Betty to one Godfrey Radmore, when that young man, through no fault of his own, lost the bulk of his fortune and proposed to take Betty with him to share the chances of a fresh start in Australia. This was all nine years ago; the war had intervened, and incidentally Radmore had come into an inheritance of a few millions. In the opening chapter the news comes that he is on his way home, and Betty's parents are much perturbed, partly because Betty's attitude of mind is an unknown quantity; partly also because it is hard to decide just how far a cordial welcome to a formerly rejected suitor is compatible with their self-respect.

But the situation is not as simple as it looks, even assuming that Betty's love has survived a nine years silence. A fascinating young widow arrives in the neighborhood on the eve of Godfrey's return, and does not hesitate to use his name and his friendship for her as an Open Sesame for business and social purposes. She makes no secret of the fact that her elderly husband, the late Colonel Crofton, was an ill tempered and neglectful husband, and that she would not pretend to be sorry that a mistaken overdose of strychnine had caused his sudden and painful demise. Now all these elements: the former sweetheart, too proud to betray her real feelings; the rejected suitor, hesitating to risk a second defeat; and the unscrupulous and well practiced "vamp," quite determined to make Godfrey's millions her own, are all ingredients for high class social comedy—were it not for the presence of Timmy, the Tosswills' youngest child, a precocious, uncanny little boy, with a sneaky habit of listening at keyholes, a professed belief in his ability to see presences invisible to other people, and a disquieting success in predicting events that could not be known by the ordinary laws of a material universe.

Now, whether Enid Crofton's husband died by accident or, as was openly hinted at the inquest, by deliberate purpose on his own part or that of some one else, the fact remains that the widow promptly got rid of everything that would remind her of him, discharged all the old servants, had his favorite dog put to death, and sought a home in an environment where she was not known. Timmy, presumably having no knowledge of all this, claims to see the widow always accompanied by a tall, middle aged, soldierly figure and a sedate wire haired terrier. And when Enid confesses to an uncontrollable aversion to dogs Timmy finds a satisfactory explanation in the fact that the fear and hostility shown by all dogs at her approach is due to their fear of this phantom dog stalking beside her. Perhaps this is too bald a way of stating the case. For the most part the author leaves you free to decide for yourself whether the boy has second sight or whether he delights impishly in inventing perturbing fictions.

At all events Timmy is the *Deus ex Machina* who saves the situation, banishes the designing widow and guides the course of true love into safe channels. All of which would be quite enjoyable were it not for that element of spiritualism which seems so wholly preposterous to any reader not imbued with the same sort of abnormality.

A FAMILY MAN. By John Galsworthy. Charles Scribner's Sons.

MR. JOHN GALSWORTHY'S plays undoubtedly deserve their popularity; he holds the mirror up to human nature in its present manifestations, and it certainly is not his fault that the pictures are not idyllic; the close season for idyls seems likely to be extended. Instead of being at fault, he is to be praised for his clear-sightedness as well as congratulated on the net cash results of his success. His new play, "A Family Man," first produced at the Comedy Theater in London a year ago, is now published here by the Scribners, in one of the well printed pasteboard covered little books which combine good taste and inexpensive production. This highly amusing satire shows what happened in an English middle class family blown into fragments of individuality by the revolt of the young women against the domineering male at the head of the house.

The literary editor of the London *Sphere* somehow has reached the conclusion that "The Cruise of the Kawa" is not authentic. He even insinuates that the photographs of Traprock's adventures in the Filbert Isles were made in a moving picture studio. He writes: "The book is so obviously a fake, and even the illustrations seem to me to be a strain after funniness, which does not come off. Such photographs could, I imagine, be produced in any film factory."